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17 MAR 1965

THE LITHGOW MERCURY, WEDNESDAY, MARCH

# Indian High Commissioner Knows How To Get There

As dusk began to fall over the district one evening last week a dark-skinned man stood on the Great Western Highway signalling cars to stop. Motorists swerved quickly and raced past, probably muttering to themselves: "Who the devil does he think he is."

Suddenly the dark-visaged, perfectly-dressed man had an inspiration. On the opposite side of the highway P.M.G. workmen had been digging holes and to warn traffic of the obstruction had clearly marked the excavations with red lanterns.

Without hesitating the stranger dashed across the concrete, grabbed up a lantern, planted himself in the middle of the road and brought the next car to a halt with a schreech of brakes.

Startled, the driver leaned out and asked: "What's wrong mate?"

"Very sorry to interrupt you," said the lamp swinger, "but I'm the High Commissioner for India . . ."

"Oh yes," replied the driver preparing to deal with a difficult situation, "well I'm the Nabob of Nepal."

"Quite frankly I am the High Commissioner and I would be very appreciative if you could tell me if you saw a Buick car being drawn along the highway by a towing truck," replied the dark man in flawless Oxford English.

## Unusual Introduction

And that was the High Commissioner for India's introduction to Lithgow. It was an experience over which the High Commissioner, General K. M. Cariappa, is still laughing and one which will always help him to remember Lithgow when he eventually returns to his own country.

The General, a noted world figure and an officer popular with his men, did not consider it below the dignity for one of high rank to wave a lantern on the highway—neither did he consider it infra dig to hitch hike a ride west as a passenger in the cabin of a lorry so that he could arrive at Woodstock, near Cowra, to open the local agricultural and stock show.

## Impressive Military Record

Born in 1900, General Cariappa is considered one of the finest military men ever produced by India. In a 30-year [illegible] with the Indian Army he rose to the rank of commander in chief — thus being the first Indian to attain this post.

His appointment was in 1949, but he retired from the post as C. in C. in 1953 to take up the appointment as High Commissioner to Australia.

**His long service in the Indian Army took him throughout the world and by coincidence he served in 1941/42 under the now Governor-General of Australia (Field Marshall Sir William Slim) in Iraq.**

He visited leading military colleges throughout the world inspecting systems of training and general practice.

## Likes To Take Turn At Wheel

A keen strategist with a brilliant mind the General has his own private motto for getting places and having things done—it is "Do it yourself."

And he does it without the least concern—even to driving himself. Anyone could be forgiven for mistaking his uniformed chauffeur, Walter Alvares, also an Indian national, for the High Commissioner.

Either that or at times they must think the High Commissioner is travelling in a peculiar type of car with a steering wheel in the back seat.

**If the General is in a hurry he drives and Walter sits up in the back seat trying his hardest to look like a diplomat with steel wires for nerves.**

Walter is no back seat driver because when the General steps on the accelerator of his sleek Buick the chauffeur is so busy saying his prayers he hasn't time to say: "[illegible] a head three miles ahead of us sir and we will be right on it in three seconds!"

Because of his enthusiastic interest in all that is Australian General Cariappa welcomed the invitation by the organisers of the Woodstock show to open their annual event.

With Walter in the back seat he set off from Sydney in his Buick, sailed up Lapstone Hill like a comet, whizzed down Mt. Victoria like a Beaufighter and shot across the undulating countryside of Hartley Valley like a bullet—Walter Alvares sitting in the back seat praying like a saint.

## Hitch-hiked On Commercial Truck

River Lett Hill proved no [illegible] of the tow waggon and it was at that point that he flagged down a startled motorist with his borrowed red lantern.

When told that he had burned out his clutch the High Commissioner saw a Cowra bound lorry draw into the petrol pumps and within minutes he was happily seated in the cabin and bumping west to keep his appointment.

## Colorful Chauffeur

What of Walter, he decided to stay with the garage proprietor and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Mal Jones for three days.

As the General prepared to leave he asked his chauffeur: "Walter, have you any money for expenses?"

"No sir," replied Walter, coming to attention and shooting out his hand like a well trained seal coming up for a juicy fillet of fish. Later he explained: "I'm an old soldier!"

Walter did not fret over his chief's absence. One of the first requests he made was: "I would like to meet a live taxi driver, it is very difficult to make their acquaintances because when they see me coming they get out of the way as quickly as possible."

**"That is quite understandable because Walter sometimes forgets he is in Australia and drives up the wrong side of the road.**

His first live taxi driver was Mr. Ab. Kissell who invited him to share the hospitality of the R.S.L. Club. The old soldier in Walter came to the surface for he entered the building beaming and came out several hours later actually glowing.

In return he entertained his hosts at the pictures and [illegible] on the third day, like [illegible] Fitzpatrick he regretfully said farewell to Lithgow he commented that he was determined to return "because even though I was in the Indian army for 13 years I think I have had the best time in this Lithgow."